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S P E E C H

OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT, K

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

FRIDAY, the 10th DAY of NOVEMBER 1797,

RELATIVE TO THE

NEGOTIATION FOR PEACE.

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INSTITUTION FOR TEACHING



S P E E C H

OF THE

RIGHT HON. WILLIAM PITT.

After Sir John Sinclair and Lord Temple had spoken, the former of whom moved an Amendment to the Address, Mr. PITT rose, and spoke as follows :

SIR,

HAVING come to this House with the firm persuasion, that there never existed an occasion, when the unanimous concurrence of this House might be more justly expected than on a proposal, to agree in the sentiments contained in the Address which has been read, I must confess myself considerably disappointed, in some degree, even by the speech of my Noble Relation, (much as I rejoice in the testimony which he has given of his talents and abilities) and still more by the Speech of the Honourable Baronet, and by the amendment which he has moved. I cannot agree with the Noble Lord in the extent to which he has stated his sentiments, that We ought to rejoice that Peace was not made; much less, Sir, can I feel desirous to accept on the part of myself, or my

colleagues, either from my Noble Kinsman, or any other person, the approbation which he was pleased to express, of the manner in which We have concluded the Negotiation—*WE have not concluded the Negotiation*—the Negotiation has been concluded by others; We have not been suffered to continue it; Our claim to merit, if We have any; Our claim to the approbation of our country is, that We persisted in every attempt to conduct that Negotiation to a pacific termination, as long as our enemies left us not the prospect but the chance or possibility of doing so, consistent with Our Honour, Our Dignity, and Our Safety. We lament and deplore the disappointment of the sincere wishes which we felt, and of the earnest endeavours which we employed; yet, we are far from suffering those sentiments to induce us to adopt the unmanly line of conduct that has been recommended by the Honourable Baronet; this is not the moment to dwell only on Our disappointment, to suppress Our indignation, or to let Our courage, Our constancy, and Our determination be buried in the expressions of unmanly fear, or unavailing regret.—Between these two extremes, it is, that I trust Our conduct is directed; and in calling upon the House to join in sentiments between those extremes, I do trust, that if We cannot have the unanimous opinion, We shall have the general and ready concurrence both of the House and of the Country.

Sir. Before I trouble the House, which I am not desirous of doing at length, with a few points which I wish to recapitulate, let me first call to your minds the general nature of the amendment which the Honourable Baronet has, under these circumstances, thought fit to propose, and the general nature of the observations by which he introduced it; he began with deploring the calamities of war, on the general topic, that all war is calamitous. Do I object to this sentiment? No; but is it Our business at a moment when We feel that the continuance of that war is owing to the animosity,
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the implacable animosity of Our enemy, to the inveterate and insatiable ambition of the present frantic Government of France, not of the people of France, as the Honourable Baronet unjustly stated it; is it Our business at that moment to content ourselves with merely lamenting in common-place terms the calamities of war, and forgetting that it is part of the duty which, as Representatives of the People, We owe to Our Government and Our Country, to state that the continuance of those evils upon Ourselves, and upon France too, is the fruit only of the conduct of the enemy, that it is to be imputed to them and not to Us.

Sir, The papers which were ordered to be laid on the table have been in every Gentleman's hand, and on the materials which they furnish We must be prepared to decide. Can there be a doubt, that all the evils of war, whatever may be their consequences, are to be imputed solely to His Majesty's enemies? Is there any man here, prepared to deny that the delay in every stage of the Negotiation, and its final rupture, are proved to be owing to the evasive conduct, the unwarrantable pretensions, the inordinate ambition, and the implacable animosity of the enemy? I will shortly state what are the points, though it is hardly necessary that I should state them, for they speak loudly for themselves, on which I would rest that proposition; but if there is any man who doubts it, is it the Honourable Baronet? is it He who makes this amendment, leaving out every thing that is honourable to the character of His Own Country, and seeming to court some new complaisance on the part of the French Directory? The Honourable Baronet, who, as soon as He has stated the nature of His amendment, makes the first part of His speech a charge against His Majesty's Ministers, for even having commenced the Negotiation in the manner and under the circumstances in which They did commence it—who, makes his next charge Their having persevered in it, when
violations

violations of form and practice were insisted upon in the earliest stage of it?—Does He discover that the French Government, whom We have accused of insincerity, have been sincere from the beginning to the end of the Negotiation? Or, after having accused His Majesty's Ministers for commencing and persevering in it, is the Honourable Baronet so afraid of being misconstrued into an idea of animosity against the people of France, that He must disguise the truth; must do injustice to the character and cause of His Own Country, and leave unexplained the cause of the continuance of this great contest? Let Us be prepared to probe that question to the bottom; to form Our opinion upon it, and to render Our conduct conformable to that opinion. This, I conceive, to be a manly conduct, and, especially at such a moment, to be the indispensable duty of the House. But let not the Honourable Baronet imagine there is any ground for His apprehension, that by adopting the language of the address, which ascribes the continuance of the war to the ambition of the enemy, He will declare a system of endless animosity between the nations of Great Britain and France; I say directly the contrary: He who scruples to declare, that in the present moment the Government of France are acting as much in contradiction to the known wishes of the French nation, as to the just pretensions and anxious wishes of the people of Great Britain—He who scruples to declare them the authors of this calamity—deprives Us of the consolatory hope which We are inclined to cherish, of some future change of circumstances more favourable to Our wishes.

It is a melancholy spectacle indeed, to see in any country, and on the ruin of any pretence of liberty; however nominal, shallow, or delusive, a system of tyranny erected, the most galling, the most horrible, the most undisguised in all its parts and attributes that has stained the page of history, or disgraced the annals of the world; but it would be
much

much more unfortunate, if when We see that the same cause carries desolation through France, which extends disquiet and fermentation through Europe; it would be worse indeed, if We attributed to the nation of France that which is to be attributed only to the unwarranted and usurped authority which involves them in misery, and would, if unresisted, involve Europe with them in one common ruin and destruction. Do We state this to be animosity on the part of the people of France? Do We state this in order to raise up an implacable spirit of animosity against that country? Where is one word to that effect in the Declaration to which the Honourable Gentleman has alluded? He complains much of this Declaration, because it tends to perpetuate animosity between two nations which one day or other must be at peace—God grant that day may be soon! but what does that Declaration express upon the subject? Does it express that because the present existing Government of France has acted as it has acted, We forego the wish or renounce the hope that some new situation may lead to happier consequences? On the contrary, His Majesty's language is distinctly this: "While this determination continues to prevail on the part of His enemies, His Majesty's earnest wishes and endeavours to restore peace to His subjects must be fruitless, but His sentiments remain unaltered, He looks with anxious expectation to the moment when the Government of France may shew a temper and spirit in any degree corresponding with His own." I wish to know whether words can be found in the English language which more expressly state the contrary sentiment to that which the Honourable Baronet imputes; they not only disclaim animosity against the people of France in consequence of the conduct of its Rulers, but do not go the length of declaring, that after all this provocation, even with the present rulers, all treaty is impracticable. Whether it is probable, that acting on the principles upon which they have acquired

acquired their power, and while that power continues, they will listen to any system of moderation or justice at home or abroad, it is not now necessary to discuss; but for one, I desire to express my cordial concurrence in the sentiment, so pointedly expressed in that passage of the Declaration in which His Majesty, notwithstanding all the provocation He has received, and even after the recent successes, which by the blessing of Providence have attended His arms, declares His readiness to adhere to the same moderate terms and principles which He proposed at the time of our greatest difficulties, and to conclude peace on that ground, if it can now be obtained, even with this very Government.

I am sensible, that while I am endeavouring to vindicate His Majesty's servants against the charges of the Honourable Baronet, which are sufficiently, however refuted by the early part of His own speech, I am incurring, in some degree, the censure of the Noble Lord to whom I before alluded. According to His principles and opinions, and of some few others in this country, it is matter of charge against Us that We even harbour in Our minds at this moment, a wish to conclude peace upon the terms which We think admissible with the present Rulers of France. I am not one of those who can or will join in that sentiment. I have no difficulty in repeating what I stated before, that in their present spirit, after what they have said, and still more, after what they have done, I can entertain little hope of so desirable an event. I have no hesitation in avowing, for it would be idleness and hypocrisy to conceal it, that for the sake of mankind in general, and to gratify those sentiments which can never be eradicated from the human heart, I should see with pleasure and satisfaction the termination of a Government whose conduct, and whose origin is such as We have seen that of the Government of France; but that is not the object—that ought not to be the principle of the war,—whatever wish I may entertain in
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my own heart, and whatever opinion I may think it fair or manly to avow, I have no difficulty in stating, that violent and odious as is the character of that Government, I verily believe in the present state of Europe, that if We are not wanting to ourselves, if, by the blessing of Providence, Our perseverance and Our resources should enable us to make peace with France upon terms in which We taint not our character, in which We do not abandon the sources of Our Wealth, the means of Our Strength, the defence of what We already possess, if We maintain Our equal pretensions and assert that rank which We are entitled to hold among nations, the moment peace can be obtained on such terms, 'be the form of government in France what it may, peace is desirable, peace is then anxiously to be sought; but unless it is attained on such terms, there is no extremity of war, there is no extremity of honourable contest, that is not preferable to the name and pretence of peace, which must be in reality a disgraceful capitulation, a base, an abject surrender of every thing that constitutes the pride, the safety, and happiness of England.

These, Sir, are the sentiments of my mind on this leading point, and with these sentiments I shape my conduct between the contending opinions of the noble Lord and of the Honourable Baronet; but there is one observation of the Honourable Baronet on which I must now more particularly remark—He has discovered that We state the Directory of France to have been all along insincere, and yet take merit for having commenced a negotiation which We ought never to have commenced without being persuaded of their sincerity. This supposed contradiction requires but a few words to explain it. I believe that those who constitute the *present* Government of France never were sincere for a moment in the negotiation: from all the information I have obtained, and from every conjecture I could form, I for one never was so duped as to believe them sincere; but I did believe and I thought I knew, that there was a general prevailing wish for

peace, and a predominant sense of its necessity growing and confirming itself in France, and founded on the most obvious and most pressing motives. I did see a spirit of reviving moderation gradually gaining ground and opening a way to the happiest alterations in the general system of that country: I did believe that the violence of that portion of the executive government which, by the late strange revolution of France, unhappily for France itself and for the world, has gained the ascendancy, would have been restrained within some bounds; that ambition must give way to reason; that even phrenzy itself must be controuled and governed by necessity. These were the hopes and expectations I entertained. I did, notwithstanding, feel that even from the outset, and in every step of that negotiation, those who happily had not yet the full power to cut it short in the beginning, who dared not trust the public eye with the whole of their designs, who could not avow all their principles, unfortunately, nevertheless, did retain from the beginning power enough to controul those who had a better disposition, to mix in every part of the negotiation, which they could not then abruptly break off, whatever could impede, embarrass, and perplex, in order to throw upon us, if possible, the odium of its failure.

Sir, The system of France is explained by the very objections that are made against Our conduct. The violent party could not, as I have stated, at once break off the treaty on their part, but they wished to drive England to the rupture; they had not strength enough to reject all negotiation, they had strength enough to mix in every step those degradations and insults, those inconsistent and unwarranted pretensions in points even of subordinate importance, which reduced ministers to that option which I have described; but which they decided in a way that has exposed them to the censure of the Honourable Baronet; they chose rather to incur the blame of
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sacrificing punctilios (at some times essential) rather than afford the enemy an opportunity of evading this plain question—Is there any ground, and, if any, what, upon which you are ready to conclude? To that point it was our duty to drive them; we have driven them to that point; they would tell us no terms, however exorbitant and unwarrantable, upon which they would be ready to make peace.—What would have been the Honourable Baronet's expedient to avoid this embarrassment? It would have been, as he has this day informed us, an address which he had thought of moving in the last session, and which, indeed, I should have been less surprised had he moved, than if the House had concurred in it; he would have moved that no *projet* should be given in till the enemy were prepared to present a *contre projet*; if it was a great misfortune that that address was not moved, I am afraid some of the guilt belongs to me, because the Honourable Baronet did suggest such an idea, and I did with great sincerity and frankness tell him, that if he was really a friend to peace, there was no motion he could make so little calculated to promote that object, and I did prevail upon the Honourable Baronet to give up the intention. If I am right in the supposition I have stated, if I am right in thinking that our great object was to press France to this point, and to put the question, If you have any terms to offer, what are they? Was there any one way by which we could make it so difficult for them to retain any pretence of a desire of peace, as to speak out ourselves, and call upon them either for agreement, or for modification, or for some other plan in their turn? By not adopting the Honourable Baronet's plan, we have put the question beyond dispute, whether peace was attainable at last, and whether Our advances would or would not be met on the part of France; and I shall to the latest hour of my life rejoice that We were fortunate enough to place this question in the light

which defies the powers of misrepresentation, in which no man can attempt to perplex it, and in which it presents itself this day for the decision of the House and of the Nation, and calls upon every individual who has at stake the Public Happiness and his own, to determine for himself, whether this is or is not a crisis which requires his best exertions in the Defence of his Country.

To shew which, I shall now proceed, notwithstanding the reproach which has been thrown on Our line of conduct; to shew the system even of obstinate forbearance, with which We endeavoured to overcome preliminary difficulties, the determined resolution on Our part to overlook all minor obstacles, and to come to the real essence of discussion upon the terms of peace. To shew this, it is not necessary to do more than to call to the recollection of the House the leading parts of the Declaration of His Majesty; I mean to leave that part of the subject also without the possibility of doubt or difference of opinion. It is certainly true that even previous to any of the circumstances that related to the preliminary forms of the negotiation, the prior conduct of France had offered to any Government that was not sincerely and most anxiously bent upon peace, sufficient ground for the continuance of hostilities; it is true that, in the former negotiation at Paris, Lord Malmesbury was finally sent away, not upon a question of terms of peace, not upon a question of the cession of European or Colonial Possessions, but upon the haughty demand of a previous preliminary, which should give up every thing on the part of the allies, and which should leave them afterwards every thing to ask, or rather to require. It is true it closed in nearly the same insulting manner as the second mission; it is true too that, subsequent to that period, in the preliminaries concluded between the Emperor and France, it was agreed to invite the allies of each party to a congress, which
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however, was never carried into execution. It was under these circumstances that His Majesty, in the earnest desire of availing himself of that spirit of moderation which had begun to shew itself in France, determined to renew those proposals which had been before slighted and rejected; but when this step was taken, what was the conduct of those who have gained the ascendancy in France? On the first application to know on what ground they were disposed to negotiate, wantonly, as will be shown by the sequel, and for no purpose but to prevent even the opening of the conferences, they insisted upon a mode of negotiation very contrary to general usage and convenience, contrary to the mode in which they had terminated war with any of the Belligerent Powers, and directly contrary to any mode which they themselves afterwards persisted in following in this very negotiation with us. They began by saying they would receive no proposals for preliminaries, but that conferences should be held for the purpose of concluding at once a definitive treaty.

His Majesty's answer was, that it was His desire to adopt that mode only which was most likely to accelerate the object in view, and the powers of his Plenipotentiary would apply to either object, either preliminary or definitive. They appeared content with his answer, but what was the next step? In the simple form of granting a passport for the Minister, at the moment they were saying they preferred a definitive peace, because it was the most expeditious; in that very passport, which in all former times has only described the character of the Minister, without entering into any thing relating to the terms or mode of negotiating, they insert a condition relative to his powers, and that inconsistent with what His Majesty had explained to be the nature of the powers he had intended to give, and with which they had apparently been satisfied; they made it a passport not for a Minister

Minister coming to conclude peace generally, but applicable only to a definitive and *separate* peace.

This proceeding was in itself liable to the most obvious objection, but it is more important, as an instance to show how, in the simplest part of the transaction, the untractable spirit of France discovered itself, it throws light upon the subsequent part of the transaction, and shews the inconsistencies and contradictions of their successive pretensions. As to the condition then made in the passport for the first time, that the negotiation should be for a separate peace, His Majesty declared that he had no choice between a definitive and a preliminary treaty, but as to a separate peace, His honor and good faith, with regard to his ally the Queen of Portugal, would not permit it: He therefore stated his unalterable determination to agree to no treaty, in which Portugal should not be included, expressing at the same time, his readiness that France should treat on the part of Holland and Spain.

On this occasion, the Good Faith of this Country prevailed; the system of Violence and Despotism, was not then ripe, and therefore His Majesty's demand to treat for Portugal, was acquiesced in by the Directory. They, at the same time, undertook to treat on their part, for their allies Holland and Spain, as well as for themselves, though in the subsequent course of the Negotiation, they pretended to be without sufficient power to treat for either.

I must here entreat the attention of the House to the next circumstance which occurred. When the firmness of His Majesty, His anxious and sincere desire to terminate the Horrors of War, and His uniform moderation overcame the violence, and defeated the designs of the Members of the Executive Government of France, they had recourse to another expedient—the most absurd, as well as the most unjustifiable: They adverted to the Rupture of the former Negotiation,

as if that Rupture was to be imputed to His Majesty—and this insinuation was accompanied with a personal reflection upon the minister who was sent by His Majesty, to treat on the part of this Country. His Majesty, looking anxiously as he did to the conclusion of Peace, disdained to reply otherwise, than by observing, that this was not a fit topic to be agitated at the moment of renewing a negotiation, and that the circumstances of the transaction were well enough known to Europe and to the world. And the result of this Negotiation has confirmed what the former had sufficiently proved, that his Majesty could not have selected, in the ample field of talents which his Dominions furnish, any person better qualified to do justice to his sincere and benevolent desire, to promote the restoration of Peace, and his firm and unalterable determination to maintain the Dignity and Honour of His Kingdom.

In spite of these obstacles and others more minute, the British Plenipotentiary at length arrived at Lisle, the full powers were transmitted to the respective Governments, and were found unexceptionable, though the supposed defect of these full powers is three months after alledged as a cause for the Rupture of the Negotiation, and what is more remarkable, it did so happen, that the French full powers were on the face of them, much more limited than Ours, for they only enabled the Commissioners of the Directory to act according to the Instructions they were to receive from time to time. On this point it is not necessary now to dwell, but I desire the House to treasure it in their memory, when we come to the question of pretence for the rupture of the negotiation.

Then, Sir, I come to the point in which we have incurred the censure of the Honourable Baronet, for delivering in on Our part a project.—To his opinion, I do not subscribe, for the reasons that I stated before. But can there be a
stronger

stronger proof of His Majesty's sincerity, than his waving so many points important in themselves, rather than suffer the Negotiation to be broken off. What was Our situation? We were to treat with a Government, that had in the outset expressed, that they would treat only definitively, and from every part of their conduct which preceded the meeting of Our Plenipotentiary, and their Commissioners; We might have expected that they would have been prepared to answer Our project almost in 24 hours after it was delivered. We stood with respect to France in this predicament, We had nothing to ask of them; the question only was, how much We were to give of that which the valour of His Majesty's arms had acquired from them, and from their Allies. In this situation, surely, We might have expected, that, before We offered the price of peace, they would at least have condescended to say what were the sacrifices which they expected Us to make. But, Sir, in this situation, what species of project was it that was presented by His Majesty's Minister? A project the most distinct, the most particular, the most conciliatory and moderate, that ever constituted the first words spoken by any Negotiator; and yet of this project what have We heard in the language of the French Government? What have We seen dispersed through all Europe by that press in France which knows no sentiments but what French Police dictates? What have We seen dispersed by that English press which knows no other use of English liberty, but servilely to retail and transcribe French Opinions? We have been told, that it was a project that refused to embrace the terms of Negotiation. Gentlemen have read the papers, how does that fact stand? In the original project we agreed to give up the conquests We had made from France and her Allies, with certain exceptions. For those exceptions a blank was left, in order to ascertain whether France was desirous that

that the exceptions should be divided between her and her Allies, or whether she continued to insist upon a complete compensation, and left England to look for compensation only to her Allies. France, zealous as she pretends to be for her Allies, had no difficulty in authorizing her Ministers to declare, that she must retain every thing for herself. This blank was then filled up, and it was then distinctly stated, how little, out of what We had, We demanded to keep; in one sense, it remains a blank still, We did not attempt to preclude France from any other mode of filling it up, but while We stated the utmost extent of Our own views, We left open to full explanation whatever points the Government of France could desire. We called upon them, and repeatedly solicited them, to state something as to the nature of the terms which they proposed, if they objected to Our's. It was thus left open to modification, alteration, or concession: But this is not the place, this is not the time, in which I am to discuss, whether those terms in all given circumstances, or in the circumstances of that moment, were or were not the ultimate terms upon which Peace ought to be accepted or rejected, if it was once brought to the point when an ultimatum could be judged of. I will not argue whether some great concession might not have been made with the certainty of Peace, or whether the terms proposed constituted an offer of Peace upon more favourable grounds for the enemy than His Majesty's Ministers could justify. I argue not the one question or the other, it would be inconsistent with the public interest and Our duty, that We should here state or discuss it; all that I have to discuss, is, whether the terms, upon the face of them, appear honourable, open, frank, distinct, sincere, and a pledge of moderation; and I leave it to the good sense of the House, whether there can exist a difference of opinion upon this point.

Sir, What was it We offered to renounce to France? In one word, all that We had taken from them. What did this consist of? the valuable, and almost under all circumstances, the impregnable Island of Martinique, various other West-India possessions, Saint Lucia, Tobago, the French part of Saint Domingo, the Settlements of Pondicherry and Chandernagore; all the French factories and means of trade in the East-Indies; and the Islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon; and for what were these renunciations to be made? For peace, and for peace only. And to whom? To a nation which had obtained from His Majesty's dominions in Europe nothing in the course of the war: which had never met Our fleets but to add to the catalogue of Our victories, and to swell the melancholy lists of Their own captures and defeats. To a power which had never separately met the arms of This country by land, but to carry the glory and prowess of the British name to a higher pitch, and to a country whose commerce is unheard of, whose navy is annihilated, whose distress, confessed by themselves, (however it may be attempted to be dissembled by their panegyrists in this or any other country,) is acknowledged by the sighs and groans of the people of France, and proved by the expostulations and remonstrances occasioned by the violent measures of its Executive Government—such was the situation in which We stood—such the situation of the enemy when We offered to make these important concessions, as the price of Peace. What was the situation of the Allies of France? From Spain, who, from the moment she had deserted Our cause and enlisted on the part of the enemy, only added to the number of Our conquests, and to her own indelible disgrace, We made claim of one island, the Island of Trinidad, a claim not resting on the mere naked title of possession, to counterbalance the general European aggrandizement of France, but as the price of something that we had

had to give by making good the title to the Spanish part of Saint Domingo, which Spain had ceded without right, and which cession could not be made without Our guarantee. To Holland, having in Our hands the whole means of their commerce, the whole source of Their wealth, We offered to return almost all that was valuable and lucrative to them, in the mere consideration of commerce; We desired in return to keep what to them in a pecuniary view would be only a burthen, in a political view worse than useless, because they had not the means to keep it, what, had We granted it, would have been a sacrifice, not to them, but to France; what would in future have enabled her to carry on her plan of subjugation against the Eastern possessions of Holland itself, as well as against those of Great Britain. All that We asked, was not indemnification for what We had suffered, but the means of preserving Our own possessions and the strength of Our naval empire; We did this at a time when Our enemy was feeling the pressure of war, and who looks at the question of peace without some regard to the relative situation of the country, with which you are contending? Look then at their trade; look at their means; look at the posture of their affairs: look at what We hold, and at the means We have of defending ourselves, and Our enemy of resisting Us, and tell me, whether this offer was or was not a proof of sincerity, and a pledge of moderation. Sir, I should be ashamed of arguing it, I confess, I am apprehensive We may have gone too far in the first proposals We made, rather than shewn any backwardness in the Negotiation, but it is unnecessary to argue this point.

Our proposal was received and allowed by the French Plenipotentiaries, and transmitted for the consideration of the Directory; months had elapsed in sending couriers weekly, and daily, from Paris to Lisle, and from Lisle to Paris; they taught Us to expect from time to time a consideration of this subject, and an explicit an-

swer to Our project. But the first attempt of the Directory to Negotiate, after having received Our project, is worthy of remark. They required that We, whom they had summoned to a definitive treaty, should stop and discuss preliminary points, which were to be settled without knowing whether, when We had agreed to them, all We had advanced one inch; We were to discuss, whether His Majesty would renounce the title of King of France, a harmless feather at most in the Crown of England; We were to discuss, whether We would restore those ships taken at Toulon, the acquisition of valour, and which We were entitled upon every ground to hold; We were to discuss, whether We would renounce the Mortgage which We might possess on the Netherlands, and which engaged much of the Honourable Baronet's attention: but it does so happen, that what the Honourable Baronet considered as so important, was of no importance at all. For a Mortgage on the Netherlands, We have none, and consequently, We have none to renounce; therefore, upon that condition, which they had no right to ask, and We had no means of granting, We told them the true state of the case, and that it was not worth talking about.

The next point which occurred, is of a nature which is difficult to dwell upon without indignation: We were waiting the fulfillment of a promise which had been made repeatedly, of delivering to Our Ambassador a Counter-Project: when they who had desired Us to come for the purpose of concluding a Definitive Treaty, propose that We should subscribe as a *sine qua non*, Preliminary that We were ready, in the first instance, to consent to give up all that We had taken, and then to hear what they had further to ask. Is it possible to suppose, that such a thing could be listened to by any Country that was not prepared to prostrate itself at the feet of France, and in that abject posture to adore its Conqueror, to solicit new insults, to submit to demands
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still more degrading and ignominious, and to cancel at once the honour of the British name. His Majesty had no hesitation in refusing to comply with such insolent and unwarrantable demands: Here again the House will see, that the spirit of the violent part of the French Government which had the insolence to advance this proposition, had not acquired power and strength in that state of the Negotiation to adhere to it; His Majesty's explanations and remonstrances for a time prevailed, and an interval ensued, in which We had a hope, that We were advancing to a Pacification. His Majesty's refusal of this demand was received by the French Plenipotentiaries with assurances of a pacific disposition, was transmitted to their Government, and was seconded by a continued and repeated repetition of promises, that a Counter Project should be presented, pretending that they were under the necessity of sending to their Allies an account of what passed: and that they were endeavouring to prevail on them to accede to proposals for putting an end to the calamities of war—to terminate the calamities of that war into which those Allies were forced, in which they were retained by France alone, and in which they purchased nothing but sacrifices to France and misery to themselves. We were told, indeed, in a conference that followed, that they had obtained an answer, but that not being sufficiently satisfactory, it was sent back to be considered. This continued during the whole period until that dreadful catastrophe of the 4th of September; even after that event, the same pretence was held out: they peremptorily promised the Counter Project in four days; the same pacific professions were renewed, and Our Minister was assured, that the change of circumstances in France should not be a bar to the Pacification. Such was the uniform language of the Plenipotentiaries in the name of the Government—how it is proved by their actions, I have already stated to the House. After this series of professions, what

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was the first step taken, to go on with the Negotiation in this spirit of conciliation? Sir, the first step was to renew, as His Majesty's Declaration has well stated, in a shape still more offensive; the former inadmissible and rejected demand; the rejection of which had been acquiesced in by themselves two months before, and during all which time, We had been impatiently waiting for the performance of their promises. That demand was the same that I have already stated in substance, that Lord Malmesbury should explain to them, not only his powers, but also his instructions, and they asked not for the formal extent of his power, which would give solidity to what he might conclude in the King's Name, but they asked an irrevocable pledge, that he would consent to give up all that we had taken from them and from their allies, without knowing how much more they had afterwards to ask. It is true they endeavoured to convince Lord Malmesbury, that although an avowal of his instructions was demanded, it would never be required that he should act upon it, for there was a great difference between knowing the extent of the Powers of a Minister, and insisting upon their exercise. And here I would ask the Honourable Baronet, whether he thinks, if in the first instance, We had given up all to the French Plenipotentiaries, they would have given it all back again to Us. Suppose I was Ambassador from the French Directory, and the Honorable Baronet was Ambassador from Great Britain, and I were to say to him, will you give up all you have gained, it would only be a handsome thing in you, as an Englishman, and no ungenerous use shall be made of it, would the Honourable Baronet expect me, as a French Ambassador, to say, I am instructed, from the good nature of the Directory, to say, you have acted handsomely, and I now return what you have so generously given. Should We not be called Children and Drivellers, if We could act in this manner, and indeed, the
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French Government could be nothing but Children and Drivellers if they could suppose that we should have acceded to such a proposal.—But they are bound, it seems, by sacred Treaties, they are bound by immutable Laws, they are sworn when they make peace, to return every thing to their Allies, and who shall require of France for the safety of Europe, to depart from its own pretensions to honour and independence.

If any person can really suppose that this country could have agreed to such a proposition, or that such a negotiation was likely to lead to a good end; all I can say is, that with such a man I will not argue. I leave others to imagine what was likely to have been the end of a negotiation, in which it was to have been settled as a preliminary, that you were to give up all that you have gained; and when, on the side of your enemy, not a word was said of what he had to propose afterwards. They demand of your Ambassador to shew to them, not only his powers, but also his instructions, before they explain a word of theirs: and they tell you too, that you are never to expect to hear what their powers are, until you shall be ready to accede every thing which the Directory may think fit to require. This is certainly the substance of what they propose, and they tell you also, that they are to carry on the negotiation from the instructions which their Plenipotentiaries are to receive from time to time from them. You are to have no power to instruct your Ambassador; you are to shew to the enemy at once all you have in view, and they will only tell you from time to time, as to them shall seem meet, what demands they shall make.

It was thus it was attempted, on the part of the French, to commence the negotiation.—In July, this demand was made to Lord Malmesbury. He stated, that his powers were ample. In answer to this, they went no farther than to say, that if he had no such power as what
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they required, he should send to England to obtain it. To which he replied, that he had not, nor should he have it if he sent. In this they acquiesce, and attempt to amuse Us for two months. At the end of that time, the Plenipotentiaries say to Lord Malmesbury, not what they said before, send to England for power to accede to proposals which you have already rejected; but *go* to England yourself for such powers, in order to obtain peace.

Such was the winding up of the negotiation, such was the way in which the prospect of peace has been disappointed by the conduct of France; and I must look upon the dismissal of Lord Malmesbury as the last stage of the negotiation, because the undisguised insult by which it was pretended to be kept up for ten days after Lord Malmesbury was sent away, was really below comment. You send him to ask for those powers which you were told he had not, and in the refusal of which you acquiesced: you have asked as a preliminary that which is monstrous and exorbitant; that preliminary you were told would not be complied with, and yet the performance of that preliminary you made the *sine qua non* conditions of his return. Such was the last step by which the French Government has shewn that it had feeling enough left to think it necessary to search for some pretext to colour its proceedings; but they are such proceedings that no pretext or artifice can cover them, as will appear more particularly from the papers officially communicated to the House.

But here the subject does not rest: if We look to the whole completion of this transaction the duplicity, the arrogance, and violence which has appeared in the course of the negotiation, if We take from thence Our opinion of its general result, We shall be justified in Our conclusion, not that the People of France, not that the whole Government of France, but that that part of the Government which had too much influence, and has now
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the whole ascendancy, never was sincere; was determined to accept of no terms but such as would make it neither durable nor safe, such as could only be accepted by this Country by a surrender of all its interests, and by a sacrifice of every pretension to the Character of a Great, a Powerful, or an Independent Nation.

This, Sir, is inference no longer, you have their own open avowal, you have stated in the subsequent Declaration of France itself, that it is not against your Commerce, that it is not against your Wealth, it is not against your Possessions in the East, or Colonies in the West, it is not against even the source of your maritime Greatness, it is not against any of the appendages of your Empire, but against the very essence of your liberty, against the foundation of your independence, against the Citadel of your Happiness, against your Constitution itself, that their hostilities are directed. They have themselves announced and proclaimed the proposition, that what they mean to bring with their invading army is the Genius of *their* liberty: I desire no other word to express the subversion of the British Constitution,—and the substitution of the most malignant and fatal contrast,—and the annihilation of British Liberty, and the obliteration of every thing that has rendered you a Great, a Flourishing, and a Happy People.

This is what is at issue; for this are We to declare Ourselves in a manner that deprecates the rage which our enemy will not dissemble, and which will be little moved by Our entreaty. Under such circumstances are We ashamed or afraid to declare, in a firm and manly tone, Our resolution to defend ourselves, or to speak the language of truth with the energy that belongs to Englishmen united in such a cause? Sir, I do not scruple for one to say, if I knew nothing by which I could state to myself a probability of the contest terminating in our favour, I would maintain that the contest with

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its worst chances is preferable to an acquiescence in such demands.

If I could look at this as a dry question of prudence; if I could calculate it upon the mere grounds of interest, I would say, if We love that degree of National Power which is necessary for the Independence of the Country, and its safety; if We regard Domestic Tranquillity, if We look at individual enjoyment, from the highest to the meanest among Us, there is not a man, whose stake is so great in the country, that he ought to hesitate a moment in sacrificing any portion of it to oppose the violence of the enemy; nor is there, I trust, a man in this Happy and Free Nation, whose stake is so small, that would not be ready to sacrifice his life in the same cause. If We look at it with a view to safety, this would be Our conduct; but if We look at it upon the principle of true honour, of the character which We have to support, of the example which We have to set to the other nations of Europe, if We view rightly the lot in which Providence has placed Us, and the contrast between Ourselves and all the other countries in Europe, Gratitude to that Providence should inspire us to make every effort in Such a Cause. There may be Danger, but on the one side there is Danger accompanied with Honour; on the other side, there is Danger with Indelible Shame and Disgrace; upon such an alternative, Englishmen will not hesitate. I wish to disguise no part of my sentiments, upon the grounds on which I put the issue of the contest. I ask, whether up to the principles I have stated, We are prepared to act? having done so, my opinion is not altered, my hopes, however, are animated from the reflection that the means of Our safety are in Our own hands; for there never was a period when We had more to encourage Us; in spite of heavy burthens, the radical strength of the Nation never shewed itself more conspicuous;

ous; its revenue never exhibited greater proofs of the wealth of the country; the same objects which constitute the Blessings We have to fight for, furnish Us with the means of continuing them. But it is not upon that point I rest it; there is one great resource, which I trust will never abandon Us, and which has shewn forth in the English Character, by which We have preserved Our Existence and Fame, as a Nation, which I trust We shall be determined never to abandon under any extremity, but shall join Hand and Heart in the solemn pledge that is proposed to Us, and declare to His Majesty, *that We know great exertions are wanting, that we are prepared to make them, and at all events determined to stand or fall by the LAWS, LIBERTIES, and RELIGION of Our Country.*

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